841 147 171

among South-American Indians. Since the sixteenth century, travelers have often been amazed by the insignificance of the menses of Indian women. Thus: "In the period of about one year which we spent in that country, ordinarily associating with the people, we have never seen the women have their menses" (J. de Léry, Voyage faict en la Terre du Brésil, Gaffarel, Paris, 1880, Vol. II, Ch. 17, p. 92); and more recently, "no one notes when they go through certain difficult periods peculiar to their sex" (Tocantins, "Estudos sobre os Mundurucus," Revista do Instituto Historico e Geographico Brasileiro, Vol. 40, 1877, p. 113). On the other hand, the text just cited could be interpreted in two different ways: the vocal inflexion of the informant suggested that the expression edẽdé edẽdé edẽdé signified "(this) moon (yes), (this) moon (no), (and this) moon (again)", meaning "every other moon" and not—as it is also grammatically possible—"moon, moon, moon," that is "every moon." The first sense would constitute a sort of physiological scandal, but remains, nevertheless the most probable. In fact, it is possible that the periodic indispositions are less important and more irregular among South-American women than is the case among the whites.

● 842 The Nambikwara have a very clear idea of the relationship between sexual intercourse and conception. It is frequent that an Indian [20] clarifies that paternity relationship is one of the blood, and not classificatory, by forming a ring with the thumb and index finger of the left hand, into which he introduces the index finger of the right hand which he glides back and forth. After this demonstration, he indicates the child saying: tagétte, tagétte, "my child, my child" (3).

3. From the same observation made by Roquette Pinto (loc. cit. p. 256) more than twenty years earlier, one can conclude that this gesture does not constitute an individual innovation, but a stylized social conduct.

842 Etymology points out the connection between the two phenomena: 683 in the eastern dialect, "copulate" is translated nitnedjuta and, in 197 the central and southern dialects, tamindige, tugitan. These three terms are attached to the respective forms [64] for "father": alugitoso (toso = man, al), tamindo, nitu. On the other hand, in the northern

842 dialect, it is: "to copulate," iruia, jufreli, while "father" is uninko;
833 but one refers rather to sexual relations by the term jikijikijî, whose
197 evocative value is reinforced by an appropriate gesticulation. This term corresponds, in the other dialects, to the compounds uinikujîju (a1), iekejakâtige (b1), "to copulate with rhythmic movements." Likewise, in the western dialect, "to copulate" is expressed by ajojore, even though the demonstration evoked at the beginning of this paragraph uses the term ninfjore.

842 We have not been able to elucidate clearly the indigenous theory of conception (conceive: petnêdige, b1; from uette, "child"). It implies apparently that the sperm coagulates in the uterus and progressively forms the child. The man alone would play a positive role while the woman would be reduced to that of a simple receptacle. Nevertheless, the woman is held responsible for sterility, whether it be attributed to a particular condition or to age.

834 It is difficult to say if the numerous prohibitions attached to
842 sexual relations have as a conscious end to assure conditions favorable to reproduction, or if they depend on more remote beliefs. The first hypothesis is hardly credible, for the Nambikwara are not very eager to have children. The quest for food is too hard, too difficult, to permit the care of several children at the same time, especially when they are still incapable of taking care of themselves; and especially, during the nomadic period a woman cannot carry more than one nursing child, besides the heavy basket. Thus the first steps of the child are impatiently awaited. At any rate, several prohibitions have, as a definite goal, the limitation of sexual activity. Besides the prohibition of incest (1), it is not good to copulate "moonlit

835 1. The prohibition concerning incest is formulated as follows:

(7) tyaîde takenaîde tamfndige manhatte (b1)
for a sister and brother to copulate is bad

[c 844] but it does not seem that the infractions are punished other than by collective disapproval. A very equivocal attitude concerning a couple (A71 and a72) and the use, in their regard, of kinship terms communicated with repugnance, and manifestly contradictory to the system, makes one believe that it could be a case of parallel cousins. We have not been able to find a sure case of incest between blood relatives.

nights" kanaro'etẽndige (b1); inversely, nights without moon are particularly approved, as well as rainy periods. In 1938 the rains were late, and the first shower came in September after six months of total drought. The event, so long awaited, was immediately celebrated by B1, who did not even wait for night to have sexual relations with his youngest wife b2. However, day-time relations are rare, and the act was carried out more ostensibly than usual, behind the thin palms of a shelter. Immediately afterwards B1 supplied a spontaneous commentary on meteorological prohibitions. Sexual relations are also, at least theoretically, forbidden between husband and wife [65] from the birth of the child to the time when he can walk. This event is hurried along by rubbing his legs with the juice of a non-identified plant (tourí?iri, c) "so that he will walk quickly" so that another can be made" (1); but, by "another," is understood, un-

1. The same custom existed among the ancient Tupí. Cf. Cardim, Tratado da terra et da gente do Brasil, new ed., Rio-de-Janeiro, 1925, p. 170.

doubtedly sexual intercourse rather than their result, rarely welcome: the Nambikwara women often have recourse to abortion, and they are familiar with a great number of plants and roots for that use. We were not able to obtain a specimen.

The attitude of the Nambikwara toward things pertaining to love can be summed up in their formula tami'ndige mõndage, translated literally, if not elegantly: "To make love is good." We have already mentioned the erotic atmosphere which fills daily life. Love affairs hold the interest and curiosity of the Indians to the highest degree. They are eager for conversation on these subjects, and the remarks exchanged in the camp are filled with allusions and hidden meanings. However, sexual relations are rare, and the prohibitions which limit them explain this state of affairs only partially. The thing truly responsible seems rather to be indigenous temperament. In the course of the amorous games to which couples give themselves over so willingly and so publicly, and which are often very far advanced, we have never been able to note the beginning of an erection. The pleasure looked for seems to be less of the physical order than playful and sentimental. Sexual relations usually take place at night, and often not far from the fires of the camp. More often the couple draws back about a hundred meters into the neighboring bush. This departure is noted immediately, and gives rise to the most

854 11. kalajodné daé jo?dnobere (b1)
Take it from the front! Take it from the back!

Or else, amidst great bursts of laughter, she takes the child and pretends to be going to throw him to the ground:

12. ?ãndam nõm tebé ãhiju (b1)
(The mother) "I am going to throw you!" (the child) "I don't want to!"

855 593 Reciprocally, the children surround their mother with a tenderness that is demanding and sometimes unquieting. At the time of leaving group b1, we jokingly proposed to a little girl (b5) that we take her with us. Her response was very characteristic, and at the same time similar to that which many other children would have made under the same circumstances:

13. hõdnjé odengenãhjen ?uadã?en tanãhnãdaje. (b1)
No! I don't want to go! I am afraid! Mama would cry!

And another observation also makes evident the affection which is always present on the part of the child: a father (C20) brings wild honey and begins by giving some to his son (C22), and only then to his wife (c21); the child, worried, watches his father's movements to see if his mother will receive her share.

[842] 855 593 During the period which precedes weaning, the child lives in as great intimacy with his father as his mother. Like the latter, the father takes care of him, holds him in his arms, wipes up his excrement when necessary, etc. Later, the child lives closer to his mother. She carries him on trips till he can walk, and later he walks at her side. He remains with her at camp or village while his father goes hunting. However, the proprieties of relationships depend first of all on the sex of the child. A father shows more interest in his son than in his daughter, since he must teach him the masculine techniques and occupations: and the same thing is true concerning relationships of a mother and daughter. But as a whole, the relationships of the father with his children show the same [843] tenderness and solicitude that we have previously mentioned. The father plays with his child while carrying him on his shoulder (alakuiriginare, b1). He makes weapons to fit the size of the child's little arms:

14 mifnde tauirétnore ikõlãagetire (b1)
The father makes arrows for the child.

736 [69] Concerning a young male orphan, nearly an adolescent, it was said to us one day that "he does not go hunting because he has no father to make him a bow." In certain cases, the father must extend his care and, to a certain degree, substitute for the absent

[734] wife. We have already cited the case of the two little girls
543 a8 and a9 whose stepmother (a7) refuses to take care of them.
Their father (A6) must, then, assume many of the lesser func-
● [742] tions. At the time of departure for a trip, it is he who prepares
the basket for the elder, measures on her the length of the tump
line, and shortens it thanks to the free end which he fastens
passing it several times through the holes of the basket-work.
549 It is also the father who tells the children the traditional stories.
538 And, with a view to shortening and making more intelligible
these often long and repetitious accounts, he applies himself
to transposing them in a style especially adapted for children.
Thus, the infant's version of the story of the Flood (1) is as

1. See below, p. 120, the complete version of this story.

follows:

15. wititento dohonenãtram kãnaram hẽpatnẽ atãtene
wejdenkjathatteme wafndwile. (bl)
Everyone was dead! There was no one left! Not a man!
Everyone was dead! Nothing more!

595 Relationships of a particular nature exist in the case of
571 polygamous marriage between the children of the first wife and
their young stepmothers. Even though the latter are called
"mother" or of "sister of the mother" by them, they live in a
state of companionship with them, especially with the girls,
which also extends to all the children of the group. We have
already dwelled on this society of girls and young wives who
take collective baths, go to defecate in a group, smoke to-
gether, joke and give themselves over to rather farfetched games,
such as spitting long jets of saliva in one another's face. An-
other example: a3 and a4 play with their stepdaughter a5. One
of them pushes her and throws her to the ground with such
violence that her head cracks against the ground and the little
one begins to shriek. The two young women heap mockeries
upon her. Finally, the youngest goes to drag her from the
ground almost by force and pushes her toward her mother, with-
out ceremony, like a package. These relationships are close,
appreciated, but without courtesy, like those which young boys
might have in our society. They rarely imply service or atten-
tion. Thus, A1 and his polygamous wives a3 and a4 divide a

1: Lévi-Strauss--92 E-5 (1938-1939)1948 SP17 Nambikuara SP17
Tupinamba SP9

TN 601 171 The reader will find other indications concerning the assimilation of the brother of the father to a classificatory father in Soares de Souza (4).

4. "Roteiro do Brasil," Revista do Instituto, etc., Vol. XIV, 1851, p. 316-317.

TN 601 552 171 The old authors often describe the marriage of cross-cousins among the Tupi, as well as that of uncle with niece. Here again we shall first refer to Anchieta:

"They do not call daughters of sisters temerico eté, nor are they considered as such; because many Indians, since they have several nieces—and very attractive women they are—do not make use of them; but since brothers have so much power over sisters, they consider that [81] nieces belong to them (the brothers), so that they may consider them as wives and use them ad libitum if they so desire, just as they give their sisters themselves to some men and take them away from others. Tarageaf, a very important Indian of the village of Jaribiatiba, which is in the area of São Vicente, had two wives, and one of them was his niece, daughter of his sister..."(1)

1. Loc. cit., p. 259.

Farther on, the two types of marriage are seen as symmetrical institutions: "...porque os pais lhes dão as filas e os irmãos as irmas." Staden also alludes to the marriage of cousins: "They also offer as a gift their daughters and their sisters." (2) The same type of thing is

2. Hans Staden, The true history of his captivity (ed. Malcolm Letts), London, Vol. II, Ch. 18, p. 146.

TN [342] found in Soares de Souza, Claude d'Abbeville and many others. With a sharp sociological sense, Anchieta discovers a connection between the marriage with the sister's daughter and the recognition of the man as alone responsible for conception. One remembers that this theory is also shared by the Nambikwara:

"Since they respect the daughters of brothers, they call them daughters, and consider them as such; and thus they consider them inviolate because they have a true relationship, coming from the [342] father, who is the agent; and the mothers are nothing more than

I: Lévi-Strauss--93 E-6 (1908-1939)1948 SP17 Nambikwara SP17
Tupinamba SD1

receptacles with respect to the fathers, receptacles in which children are deposited, and for this reason the sons of fathers, if they are born of slaves or captives taken from another tribe, are always free and just as esteemed as the others; and the sons of women, if these sons are begotten by captives, are considered slaves and are sold, and sometimes they kill and eat them, even though they may be their own grandchildren, sons of their daughters, and for this reason also they use the daughters of sisters with no prejudice at intercourse, but there is no obligation or universal custom to consider them as true wives, more than the others, as has been stated above. And for this reason the fathers marry them now to their uncles, brothers of the mothers, if the parties are agreeable, by virtue of the power which they have to deal with them as they wish, something which until now is not done with nephews, sons of brothers, nor even in other relationships which are more distant and which come through the line of the fathers, because among the Indians this is considered very strange." (3)

3. Loc. cit., p. 259-260.

Without doubt the marriage of cross-cousins is widespread throughout the whole of South America. (4) But among the Tupi it

4. Thus Breton, concerning the Caraïb of the Antilles says: "First cousins whom we call sons of the brothers of the father are called brothers, and these brothers of the father are also called fathers; and the children of these brothers do not contract alliances together, but rather with the children of the sisters of their fathers." (Dictionnaire Caraïbe-François, Auxerre, 1665, p. 11.)

was rather avuncular marriage which held the attention of the first travelers. Thus, Léry notes: "As for the uncle, he takes his niece" (as a wife); and Thevet: "From the time they are born, the maternal uncle raises them and retains them for future wives." (5) Magalhães

5. Léry, loc. cit. II, Ch. XVII, p. 85;
Thevet, Cosmogonie universelle, p. 932.

de Gandavo expresses himself inexactly, without doubt, but [82] in

649 which cause sickness, they have given the magical herbs whose smoke blinds the dangerous evil eye, and the techniques which will drive away the storms. Thus the shaman operating on a symbolic level continues the struggle for survival which has been defined for the Nambicuara by the nature of their adjustment to their physical environment and their relationships to one another.

THE LIFE CYCLE

BIRTH

833 The Nambicuara recognize sexual intercourse (coitus) as the cause of pregnancy (fecundation). This act takes place in the woods while the husband and wife are out hunting or collecting, for it is considered improper to have sexual intercourse in public, even at night around the common camp fire. If a shaman should see a couple in sexual embrace while practicing his rites it would spoil his power. Although shamans use a special hut when calling their evil eye there is always a chance that they may see a couple in the sexual act, so every effort must be made to avoid this danger. Shamans themselves abstain from sexual intercourse for 2 or 3 days before getting in contact with the spirits.

843 There appear to be no food taboos surrounding pregnancy among the Wakitáun. The husband continues hunting and collecting as usual, but he must avoid working too hard in the field for fear of causing his wife to abort. Women do not practice abortion, and the Nambicuara did not mention any medicines used for this purpose. Honey is considered conducive to sexual vigor and is used by young couples. Childless marriages are attributed to sterility in women, and a man may abandon his wife for this reason.

844 Birth takes place in the house, or in the camp if the family is out hunting. Just before expecting the birth of a child the expectant mother drinks the juice of certain herbs which are believed to facilitate birth. The husband and two older women assist in the delivery. The woman kneels on the ground and is supported by her husband. The umbilical cord is tied with a certain vine and then cut with a bamboo sliver. Among the Kitãnihu it is bitten off by one of the midwives. The placenta is buried at the place of birth and when the umbilical cord dries and falls off, it, too,

6: Levi-Strauss E-S (1938-1939) 1943
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

In questions of relationship they never use the word *ete* (true) since they call their father's brothers "father," their brothers' sons "son," and their father's brothers' sons "brother"; when they wish to designate their actual father or son, they say *aruale amandengara* "my father who engendered me," or, for a son, *amaire amandengo* "my son whom I engendered." I never heard an Indian call his wife *amandengo ete*, but simply *amandengo* or merely "mother of my children," and I never heard a woman refer to her husband as *amandengo* "real husband," but simply *amandengo* or *amandeiro* calls "father of my children." They use these terms indifferently for their husband or lover. If the husband calls one of his wives *amandengo ete*, he means the most esteemed or best loved wife and she is often the last one he took.[5]

This text also shows that the Tupi encountered a difficulty in their kinship system, namely, how to distinguish the classificatory parents or children from the consanguineous ones. This stresses the structural similarity between their kinship system and that of the Nambikwara, since the latter met with the same problem. Apparently the Tupi, like the Nambikwara, felt no need for special terms, but when it was necessary, made comments based on physiological considerations. When the Nambikwara are asked to point out the real status of their consanguineous children, they add to the name for "son" or "daughter" another word, the meaning of which is "child" or "little one." The physiological implication of this new term is perfectly clear, since is is ordinarily used to designate newly born animals, while the former terms are applied only to relationships within the human family. Complementary indications regarding the assimilation of the father's brother to a classificatory father may be found in Soares de Sousa.[6]

The old authors give numerous examples of cross cousin marriage and of marriages between uncles and nieces. Here again Anchieta will be our main source:

> Though many Indians have several nieces, and very attractive indeed, nevertheless they do not use them as wives. However, brothers have such authority over sisters that they consider their nieces as belonging to them and that they are entitled to marry them and to use them ad libitum if they wish. In the same way they give their sisters to some and refuse them to others. Tarugua[ç], an important chief of the village of Jurubatiba in the plain of San Vicente, had two wives one of whom was his niece, his sister's daughter.[7]

Both types of marriage are treated as symmetrical institutions in the same document: "... because the fathers give them the daughters and the brothers the sisters...."[8] Furthermore, cross cousin marriage is referred to by Staden:

---

[5] *Informação dos Costumes dos Indios do Brasil* (Revista Trimensal do Instituto Historico e Geographico Brasileiro, T. 8, 1846, I 2da Serie), p. 259.

[6] *Roteiro do Brasil* (Revista do Instituto Historico e Geographico Brasileiro, T. 14, 1851), pp. 316-317.

[7] *Loc. cit.*, p. 259. [8] *Ibid.*, p. 261.

6: Levi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939) 1943
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

"They make presents also of their daughters and sisters . . . ",[1] by Soares de Sousa,[2] Claude d'Abbeville,[3] and others. With a sound sociological feeling, Anchieta establishes a link between the custom of a man marrying his sister's daughter and the recognition of the male as the only one responsible for conception, a theory also shared by the Nambikuara. On this matter, Anchieta writes:

They call the brothers' daughters "daughter" and treat them as such. Therefore they would not have sexual intercourse with them, since they believe that the true kinship link has its origin in the father, whom they consider the only agent, while the mother, according to them, is merely a container in which the children are formed. . . . For that reason too, they use the sisters' daughters "ad copulam" without sin. . . . For the same reason, the father will give his daughters in marriage to their uncles, their mother's brothers, a thing which, until now, was never done with the nephew who is the brother's son. . . .[4]

Cross cousin marriage seems to have a very wide distribution throughout South America.[5] But among the Tupi *avunculate* marriage in particular aroused the interest of early travellers. For instance, Léry notices: "As to the uncle, he marries his niece";[6] and Thevet: "As soon as they are born, the maternal uncle lifts them from the ground and keeps them for his future wives."[7] Magalhaes de Gandavo expresses himself as follows:

It is their custom to marry the women who are their nieces, the daughters of their brothers or sisters; these are considered their legitimate and true wives. Fathers of the women cannot refuse them, nor can any persons other than their uncles marry them.[8]

But this statement seems to be doubly inaccurate. For other references to the same phenomenon one may turn to Nobrega,[9] Vasconcellos,[10] and Soares de Sousa.[11]

---

[1] Hans Staden, *The true History of his Captivity* (Ed. Malcolm Letts, London, Vol. II, Ch. 18), p. 146.

[2] *Tratado Descriptivo do Brasil em 1587*, nova edição (São Paulo, 1938. Cap. CLVII).

[3] *Histoire de las Mission . . .* (Paris, 1614).

[4] *Loc. cit.*, pp. 250-306. The same interpretation is made by Manoel de Nobrega, *Cartas do Brasil 1549-1560, Cartas Jesuiticas I* (Publ. da Academia Brasileira, Rio de Janeiro, 1931).

[5] For instance, Breton gives clear evidence of its occurrence among the Antillean Caribs: "First cousins whom we call father's brother's sons call each other 'brothers' and the father's brothers are also called 'fathers.' The children of brothers do not marry, but they may contract marriages with the children of their father's sisters." *Dictionnaire Caraïbe-Français* (Auxerre, 1665), p. 11.

[6] *Voyage faict en la Terre du Bresil*, ed. Gaffarel. (Paris, 1880. Vol. 2, ch. 17), p. 85.

[7] *Cosmographie Universelle*, p. 932.

[8] Pedro de Magalhaes de Gandavo, *The Histories of Brazil* (The Cortes Society, New York, 1922. II, ch. 10), p. 99.

[9] *Cartas do Brasil. Loc. cit.*, p. 148.

[10] *Chronica da Companhia de Jesu do Estado do Brasil* (Lisboa, 1865. I, 82), p. 133.

[11] *Tratado*, pp. 157, 152.